

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee
Minutes for January 15, 2003
Third Wednesday of the Month

Members present: Art Albrecht, Greg Coffman, Rudy Propst, Les Bolt, Joe Fitzgerald, Jim Huffman, Dorn Peterson, Kathy Sarver, Robert Steere, Deb Stevens, and David Wiens.

Members absent: Shelley Baker, Richard Baugh, Reg Foucar-Szocki, and Carl Wassum.

Staff present: Stacy Turner, Director of Planning and Community Development; Earl W. Anderson, Senior Planner; and Keith Markel, Planner.

Chairman Huffman called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. He then asked Mr. Anderson to introduce the consultants.

Mr. Anderson introduced Phoebe Kilby and Barry Carpenter of Sympoetica. This consulting firm out of Woodstock will provide the core support for the City's Comprehensive Plan. They have several other consulting firms working under their direction to provide detailed expertise in specific areas. He then turned the meeting over to Ms. Kilby.

Ms. Kilby welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced her firm in greater detail. She then began going through some of the handouts she provided the committee. The first handout explained the overall purpose of the Comprehensive Plan. She made the point that the plan must reflect the community's input and needs, not just the views of the CPAC. The committee needs to work hard to reach out to the community and attract wide public involvement. In the end the document will be a compromise between many different views. The Comprehensive Plan will be a policy directing document.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked how the demographic information would be collected. He highlighted some inconsistencies with the 2000 Census information.

Ms. Kilby said that she would work with City staff to make sure the Census data used by the Comprehensive Plan would be accurate. Data would also be gathered from the Weldon-Cooper Center, the Planning District Commission, City records of building permits and demolitions, and information from the public school system.

Mr. Coffman said that the school system has had problems recently with the data coming from the Weldon-Cooper center. He said that it would also be useful to know how much Section Eight housing there is in the City. He recommended Ms. Kilby talk with Don Ford, Superintendent of Public Schools.

Ms. Kilby said that she would do that and work with the Housing Authority to gather more information. In addition she was still gathering information and has a meeting scheduled with Mr. King of James Madison University.

Mr. Steere commented that western Virginia is growing rapidly, and it is very hard for the statistics to stay current.

Ms. Kilby said that her team would look at many factors that relate to population trends in the City. She then went on to talk more about the broad concepts of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan must have goals and useful strategies to reach those goals.

The City's old plan is very encyclopedic, with many tables and numbers. It shows a snapshot of the community at the time the plan was made. It is not very long range and it is not very user friendly.

The current trend is to make smaller Comprehensive Plans that are more usable. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range vision, every plan is different, and this plan will be personal to Harrisonburg. It is good to have an executive summary, which is a condensed version of the total plan. This is good to post on the Internet because the full version is often hard to navigate. The Comprehensive Plan will be general in nature, but follow-up plans can provide more detail to specific sections. She then gave examples of guidelines that might show up in the plan such as conditional zoning that would provide proffer guidelines and performance zoning that would allow for mixed uses with limitations to traffic, noise, and light.

Mr. Coffman asked if the Comprehensive Plan would get into the loop road issue for the City.

Ms. Kilby said that there will be a transportation plan included in this project. It would show how roads from the City would connect with roads in the County. She then reviewed the Scope of Service. She said that she understood that the CPAC wanted to create their own list of goals and objectives. Those would be given to the consultants to be incorporated with their recommendations.

After this discussion Ms. Kilby gave a brief introduction to the public input meeting process. She explained how she likes to work with small groups, so several of the CPAC members may be called upon to help facilitate small group discussions. She provided an annotated agenda for the community input meetings. She explained that the small groups would generate a list of issues on a sheet of paper. The small group would then vote for the issues that they felt were the most important.

CPAC members expressed their thoughts that there should be no voting at these meetings.

Mrs. Sarver suggested calling the voting process "prioritizing".

Other members said that the small groups could prioritize, but once the ideas were brought back to the large group, all ideas would be included.

Mr. Anderson then shared some marketing ideas with the committee. Staff will focus on media outlets such as television, radio, and newspapers as well as signs, handouts, and focused marketing to large clubs and organizations.

Mr. Wiens expressed concern over not doing enough to reach out to minority groups, namely, the Hispanic community. He did not feel that segment of the population would feel comfortable coming to the public input meetings. He was expecting the CPAC to seek out this community and meet with them individually.

Mr. Anderson said that originally the CPAC explore the option of having specific minority meetings, but funding did not allow for this.

Concerns were also raised over the equality of having specific meetings with the Hispanic community but not other large minority groups such as the Russian and Eastern European population within the City.

It was decided by CPAC would keep the current schedule of five meetings that will be open to all segments of the public. If the committee feels that the Hispanic population is not being represented in these meetings, other measures can be taken to reach to this population. Some committee members may attend meetings in Hispanic churches. Another option that was suggested was to have the religious leaders of these Hispanic churches organize their own meetings and then have representatives bring the ideas from that meeting to one of the public input meetings.

Mr. Anderson then shared some theme concepts with the committee to be used on the different posters and media advertisements.

Mr. Coffman said that he would be glad to announce the public input meetings at the School Board meetings. He requested that a reminder be sent to him giving him the dates of the meetings.

Mr. Fitzgerald agreed to do the same at City Council.

CPAC agreed to not hold a meeting in February because of the public input meetings, so the next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19th at 7:00p.m.

The meeting for the CPAC to get together to make a list of goals taken from the community meetings will be on April 23, 2003.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.